

VitaMin

Vital health information in a minute!

Know your numbers

A big part of your health routine should be visits to your doctor for regular wellness exams. During these exams, your doctor will most likely perform a few routine tests. When you receive your test results, it will be important for you to understand what those numbers mean to your health.

Blood Pressure

One of the most important things you can do to reduce your risk of a stroke or heart attack is to keep your blood pressure near 120/80.



BMI (Body Mass Index)

Obesity is associated with a number of life-threatening diseases, including high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, stroke and even certain cancers. BMI is a tool that indicates your obesity status. To get your BMI:

- Multiply your weight by 703
- Divide the result by your height in inches
- Divide this number by your height in inches again

You are at a healthy weight if the final number is between 18.5 and 24.9. If the final number is 25 or higher, you should consider losing weight. You should also remember that results will vary by gender and age, and muscle weighs more than fat. Some people who are fit and very muscular have a high BMI.

Glucose

Monitoring blood glucose levels is critical in the early detection and treatment of diabetes, a disease that can cause damage to the heart, kidney, nerves, blood vessels or eyes. While blood glucose levels will vary, ideal fasting blood glucose is between 70–110 mg/dl. If your fasting level is above 120, you should see your doctor for follow-up.

Cholesterol

The body produces two types of cholesterol: HDL, known as “good” cholesterol because it protects against dangerous blockages in the arteries that can lead to heart disease; and LDL, known as “bad” cholesterol because it is more likely to clog arteries and produce heart disease.

A healthy total cholesterol level is a reading of less than 200 mg/dl. Total cholesterol is a combination of LDL cholesterol, HDL cholesterol and triglycerides (another form of fat in your body). The goal is to have your LDL levels less than 100, HDL levels greater than 40, and triglycerides less than 150.

Once you know your numbers, you and your doctor will be able to better discuss what you may need to get healthier. ■

130 – a new number to watch

Did you know that you can actually cut your odds of dying in about the time it takes to watch a movie? New research shows that walking for about 130 minutes per week slashed heart disease death risk by 50%. As expected, people with high cholesterol are more likely to die of heart disease than people with normal levels. But the study shows that even with high cholesterol, those who are physically fit are half as likely to die of heart disease as unfit people with similar cholesterol levels. The magic number – 130 – translates into four or five weekly workouts, each lasting 30 minutes. Consult your doctor before starting a fitness program. He or she can also check your cholesterol levels and tailor a heart-health program to suit your needs.

Source: WebMD Health News



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